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**Agents and Strategies of Children's Socialization in the *Gadaa* System of Borana Oromo, Southern Ethiopia**Wario Wako<sup>1</sup>, Firehiwot Jabessa<sup>2\*</sup>, Hunde Doja<sup>3</sup> and Nega Jibat<sup>4</sup>

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## Abstract

This study aimed at exploring agents and strategies of children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo. The study employed a qualitative case study research design to address the intended research objectives. Methods of data collection include in-depth and key-informant interviews, FGD, observation, and document review. The study participants were parents, children between the age of 9-16, *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Gadaa* councils, and relevant government experts (particularly the office in charge of the Culture and Tourism Bureau, and Women, Children, and Youth Affairs). Non-probability sampling technique specifically purposive sampling technique was employed. Thematic analysis was employed for classifying, analyzing, and explaining themes. The values of privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were duly considered. The findings of the study indicated that children's socialization is a cooperative task in Borana. It starts with parents and extends to the communities and broader societal actors. These agents of children's socialization teach children societal values, language, self-care skills, cognitive, motor, and social skills, and gender roles. Advising, punishing, storytelling and riddle, practicing life situations, providing factual information, and teaching are the strategies for children's socialization. Challenging factors that hinder the socialization process of children are being with misbehaving families, friends, and villagers, the inadequacy of advice, divorce, poverty, drug addiction, orphan hood, and early marriage. Finally, the study recommends that future research should expand the scope of the present study by exploring the children's socialization in each *Gadaa* grades and parenting styles in the *Gadaa* system.

**Keywords:** /Agents /Borana Oromo/Children Socialization/*Gadaa* System /Strategies/

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## 1. Introduction

Socialization is the way we learn how to view our world; how to communicate with others, what it means to be male or female; how, where, when, why and with whom to be intimated; what we should and should not do under certain circumstances; what our society defines as moral and immoral (Newman, as cited in Okoroafor & Njoku, 2012). With regard to this, a newborn child is not a social entity and the human organism is humanized into a social entity through the socialization process (Tchombe & Lukong, 2016). Socialization cannot take place in a vacuum as individuals, groups, and institutions create a social context to socialize (Mohan, 2018). Agents who are key figures in the enforcement of social norms are known as socializing agents. And these include parents, institutional agents (school, workplace, and government), friends, culture and mass media (Huang et al., 2019). These scholars further stated that these agents affect the growing child and contribute to shaping every aspect of its development in accordance with social and cultural aspirations, as well as the needs and demands of the society in which a child exists. Moreover, the degree to which children learn how to participate and be accepted by society has important consequences for their development and future lives (Perez-Felkner, 2013).

The experience of children in socialization may not be smooth. There are various challenging factors from the families and surrounding environment which may hinder the desired socialization process of the children. Some of these challenges include: loss of one or both parents, divorce, drug abuse, family violence and poverty. These challenges reduce the popularity of children among peers, which can further lead to their poor socialization (Napora, 2015). Likewise, the home environment is an important factor in socializing children, and it is vital for children to be surrounded by mentally and physically stable adult family members who are consistent, reliable and caring, compassionate and encouraging (Yunus & Dahlan, 2013). In line with this, discriminated children have difficulty in communicating with peers, tend to avoid interaction with others, and this affects their socialization process (Schaffer, as cited in Napora, 2015).

In the western world, the role of the community in socialization is not as such effective due to emphasis on individualism and lack of long-term attachments and obligations between community members (Bellah et al., as cited in Arnett, 1995). On the other hand, the indigenous African societies socialize their children under their traditional customs and values (Boakye, 2010). For instance, Boakye stated that children in Ghana are not only respected by members of the society but also it is the duty of the society to ensure that children are safe and socialized properly.

In Oromo society, knowledge and information are transmitted mainly from generation to generation through socialization with the *Gadaa* system, and children are expected to learn important activities necessary for social integration and community development (Asafa, 2012). *Gadaa* system is the indigenous governing system which guides the social, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities of the Oromo society (Asmarom, 1973). In line with this view, Oromo children are infused with values and rules of conduct, becoming philosopher without school, eloquent without the rhetoric, a soldier without enlistment, a lawyer without code and advance with steps in the accomplishment of their duties (Ayalew, as cited in Dereje, 2012).

Although the above sources indicated children's socialization, there have been only a few studies in the context of Oromo society. For instance, Melkamu (2015) studied parents' postpartum infant care and socialization starting from 0-3 years in Borana Oromo. The study found that concerning early attachment and socialization, in Borana Oromo culture the new born baby after birth is not separated from his/her mother to get care and socialization. This study only focuses on the roles of parents in children's socialization and care while children above 3 years were excluded which needs further study. Also, Wubshet (2018) assessed the nexus between child care values and practices in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo. The study revealed that some indigenous child caring practices of the study area are being challenged by contextual values and related factors. Similarly, Tadesse (2014) conducted a research on positive parenting using an ethnographic study with particular focuses on storytelling for socialization of children among the Guji Oromo. The study's finding

revealed that among Guji-Oromo, storytelling provides opportunities for constructive bonding between parents and children, educate and entertain which in turn helps the socialization process. Dame (2014) conducted a study on childrearing among the Arsi Oromo: Values, Beliefs, and Practices. The study found out that compared to Arsi mothers, Arsi fathers play little roles in the early socialization of children, domestic tasks, and child care activities, where these continue to put burden on mothers regarding childrearing responsibilities and household chores. Likewise, Dinke and Gurmessa (2019) conducted research on an assessment of traditional child rearing practices and its implication for early childhood program of Dire Enchini Woreda, West Shoa Zone, Ethiopia. The finding reveals that the holistic development of the children can be realized through the play, game and song the children learn. These are helpful in children's mental development, physical strengths, logical and reasoning skills, and problem solving abilities.

Generally, exploring into available literatures cited above, we come across that there is a research gap about the agents and strategies of children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the existing gaps by addressing the following research questions: How do the socialization agents contribute to children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo? What are the strategies of children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo? And what are the challenging factors for children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo?

## 2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

In this study we employed two significant theories: Ecological Theory and Social Learning Theory which can be best to understand the children socialization.

Ecological Theory argues that understanding child development requires an examination of wider social and cultural systems in addition to the immediate environment of the child like families, schools, peers, neighborhoods and communities in which development occurs (Keskin, 2006). As suggested by Bronfenbrenner (cited in Krishnan, 2010) human beings are not able to develop in isolation, but within a network of relationships involving family and society. Hence, this is in fact, the child's interaction with the environment is reciprocal; the environment affects the child and the child affects the environment.

According to the Social Learning Theory, children learn by having their actions rewarded and praise, and by imitating role models after observing how their behavior has been interpreted by others (Nolan & Raban, 2015). Accordingly, the basic principle is that moment-to-moment exchanges are crucial; if a child is immediately rewarded for his / her behavior, such as obtaining parental care or approval, then he/she is likely to do the behavior again, whereas if he/she is ignored (or punished) then he/she is less likely to do it again (O'Connor & Scott, 2007). This Theory shows children learn all their behaviors and roles through rewards, punishment, imitating role models after observing, and this can help them to conform to cultures and values of the society which is essential for socialization process.

## 3. Methods

Qualitative case study research design was employed to explore the agents and strategies of children's socialization in cultural context of Borana Oromo. Data for this article were collected in 2020 from Arero district, Borana Zone, Oromia National Regional State. Kawulich (2012) stated that the central concepts of qualitative research are to explore how people make sense in their own minds and in their own words out of their own concrete real-life experiences. In-depth and key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), observation, and document review data collection techniques were employed to collect data. Semi-structured in-depth interview was utilized with children whose ages are between nine and sixteen years and their parents (who did not participate in FGDs and interviews). The key informants were *Abbaa Gadaa* (Leader of *Gadaa*) and experts of government officials who have knowledge and experiences of the culture and who are working with children. FGDs were conducted with parents from *Gadaa* councils (mothers and fathers

separately). We also used non-participant overt observation. Overt observation is where the participants are aware that they are being observed and in no way, you hide the fact that you are observing them for research purposes (Kawulich, 2012). Therefore, we observed children's interactions with their families and communities, peers, and different children's socialization practices, gender socialization practices and different ceremonies of children such as *Maq-baasa* (child naming). In document review, relevant documents such as policy, report and meeting minutes of Culture and Tourism Bureau, and Bureau of Women, Children and Youth affairs were reviewed.

Non-probability purposive participant selection technique was employed. Gentles et al. (2015) said that the notion of purposive sampling is used to indicate that participants are selected on the basis of their knowledge, experience and verbal eloquence to describe a group or culture to which they belong. Hence, the researchers followed the principle of selecting to the point of redundancy data i.e. data saturation point (Yin, 2016). In this way, the study employed four children (two boys and two girls) from different parents and five parents (two mothers and three fathers separately) participated in the interview. Furthermore, there were three key informants (one current *Abbaa Gadaa*) and two with government sector officials (one from Culture and Tourism Office, and one from Office of Women, Children and Youth Affairs); two FGDs with eight participants in each group (one with mothers and one with fathers) were conducted. Hence, a total of twenty-eight study participants have participated in this study.

This study used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data. All interviews recorded via audio-recorder were transcribed into text along with the researchers' field notes and then reduced through the methods of coding, categorizing into major and sub-themes that emerged from empirical data and then analyzed to generate meanings and implications. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, data source triangulation, peer review and member checking were undertaken.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Agents of Children's Socialization in *Gadaa* System

Participants were asked about the agents of children's socialization in the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo. The responses of the participants indicated that everyone in the community is responsible to socialize children because the outcomes of socialization are for the betterment of all communities. In the *Gadaa* system of Borana Oromo, the agents of children's socialization include parents, siblings, extended family members (grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, nephew), friends, villagers, head of the villages, clan, *Abbaa Gadaa* (head of *Gadaa*), strangers and community as a whole. The data from overt observation also confirms that socializing children is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

Besides, one parent (P: II) asserted that "Among these agents of children's socialization, parents are the most effective in socialization because they have a high attachment with children in their daily life situations." According to one participant in FGD II (F: VI), among the above-identified agents of socialization, a grandmother is not as such effective in socialization because as she gets old, she gives high attention to love and peace than disputes. She believes in seeing grandchild as a symbol of blessing, grace, and living long lives. Loving children excessively is like giving thanks to God. And also, since her children already left home, she used as techniques not to live alone and consider them as representative of her children. For instance, children socialized by grandmothers are sometimes become careless because she does not punish when they do wrong and never wakeup in the morning to start their daily work early in the morning. And due to these, they become dependent and fail to ensure responsibility and show poor features of socialization.

One participant from an in-depth interviews with parents (p: II) said: "We teach good behaviors to both our children and the children of our village and the entire community. Because, if they are socialized in a good manner, they represent clan, take responsibility and sustain generation."

In line with this, one key informant (KI: I) said:

When we move from one village to another and see children we ask, *ati ka eennuu?* (Whose are you?), *gosii maan?* (What is your clan), and failing to this answer is considered a feature of poor socialization. Also, when we see children doing socially unacceptable things, we advise or punish like our own children. Also, we report to the villagers or parents when we see children deviating from the norms of the community. And their parents never say you beat [why have you beaten?] or punish [why have you punished?] my child. When children accused a person who beat them to their parents, they would also be punished by their parents.

## 4.2 Contribution of Agents of Children's Socialization

The data from research participants indicated that in their living home and social environment, children learn various things and are shaped by their agents of socialization. In socializing children, parents play a great role. For instance, the interviewed parents revealed that they teach toilet training, self-care skills, language, cognitive, motor and social skills, and gender roles, correcting errors as well as orienting about their immediate families, clans and community.

According to parents, the role of siblings is crucial in socializing their little brothers and sisters. For instance, one interviewed parent (P: I) stated that the elder sister shows her younger sister what she learned from her mother (e.g. cooking, building a house, sweeping and arranging or ordering things). Another parent (P: IV) asserted that an elder brother teaches his younger brother how to herd and graze cattle, how to hold spear and hunt, how to shoot gun and wrestle; he also teaches him riddling, puzzling, and storytelling. Besides, one child (C: III) said, "I teach my siblings what I learn from my parents and other agents of socialization and punish them when they do wrong." Moreover, beyond parents and siblings, the role of the living environment is paramount to socialize children. The interviewed parent (P: I) pointed out, "*Arbii biyyee oolu fakkaata*" (an elephant usually appears to be the same color of the soil it lives.). The message that the above proverb conveys to children is that children act like their social environment (e. g. friends and villagers) and learn what is good or bad from where or with whom they are living or staying.

In addition, the interviewed parent (P: III) further explained the role of a father in encouraging independent learning while socializing children as follow:

One day a father and a son went for hunting and a son asked his father how to hold *wantee* (war shield). His father responded that 'if you need, hold it on your head! How do you ask me this simple question? How do you not know still how to hold your war shield and spear? You are better to die!'

Hence, from what has been described above, one can clearly understand how to teach children independence. And a child does not wait for his/her parents to teach him/her about simple tasks.

In children's socialization, the roles of strangers are indispensable. For instance, one child (C: IV) said:

One day, I was playing with my friends when our herd of cattle which we were herding and grazing was lost. An adult man came to us and asked what we were doing there. He asked us, 'Where are your cattle? Stop playing! Go and look after the cattle; if not, I will beat all of you and report to your parents.' My friends and I do not know the man.

## 4.3. Strategies for Children's Socialization

The findings generally revealed that the strategies of children's socialization in *Gadaa* are advising, telling stories and riddle, and punishing (e. g. beating with a stick, pinching and yelling). There are more strategies, such as teaching by showing things and events around them (e.g. their culture), practicing life situations (engaging in activities), reacting towards their action immediately (e.g. through facial warning) and answering what they ask properly or providing the right information. They added that singing songs, allowing children (especially the sons) to visit elders who are recognized for their *argaa-dhageettii* (total knowledge of *Gadaa* acquired through seeing and hearing), observing children's play, limiting children's play with elders, and

through begging children whiningly (e.g. If you do this, I will do this for you) are strategies in socializing children.

Likewise, our observation confirms that during their night (before their sleep), children formed groups while playing riddle and storytelling through getting facilitation from their parents and elder siblings. Also, the mothers mostly react towards their daughters' action using facial expression, but this is not observed from their sons. Parents use more talking than facial expressions to shape their sons.

#### 4.4. Role of Children's Socialization Strategies

According to the research participants, the role of children's socialization strategies is indispensable in conforming children to the community's norms and all life situations. For instance, one participant from an in-depth interview with parents (P: III) stated the strategies of children's socialization as follow:

To be socialized well, children should undertake the following activities like *foora godaanuu* (going for cattle camp or grazing cattle far away from the village). In this practice, children learn challenges, life situations of the community, hunting, and adapt the social life. *Obaa*: fetching water for cattle (this helps as a sport) build their energies and become strong to react towards any challenges which they face from the environment. *Tika*: grazing or herding (this helps to take responsibility, develop the feeling of ownership and learn songs (e.g. cattle's songs, baby's songs, women's songs, and girl's songs), taking children to visit someone who know about culture very well and the children are expected to recall what the elders said. What is said by the societally recognized elders is like something broken and divided into different parts. And a person who narrates as stated by the elders and organizes these dispersed ideas is perceived a person who fixes what has broken. When the child explains accordingly, one may call him as upright and propose him to be *Hayyuu* (knowledgeable person to be elected to lead the clan) in the near future.

In addition, one participant from FGD I (F: VIII) pointed out that children are socialized through riddles (which helps children to recreate, think critically and find the answer for complex questions, and this helps for their mental development), storytelling (helps children to recreate), learn culture (material and non-material cultural elements), physical environment (biodiversity, natural resources,...), and social structure (roles and status). Similarly, data from parents revealed that parents or other family members may play with children like:

Challenger	Respondent
<i>Binoo</i> (Animals)	<i>Bineettii</i> (Animals)
<i>Maan faa?</i> (Which animal?)	<i>Arba</i> (Elephant)
<i>Maan faa?</i> (Which animal?)	<i>Nyeeca</i> (Lion) etc.

Listing these animals' names develops children's vocabulary, knowledge about existing animals and avoids slip of tongue.

Furthermore, while expressing the role of children's play in socialization, the interviewed parent (P: IV) said, "*Wannii kun ona; onii kun galma; galmii kun galma galma ona Waataati*" (meaning: this is an abandoned home; this abandoned home is *galma*<sup>1</sup>, and this *galma* is the *galma* of Wata's<sup>2</sup> abandoned home. Children are expected to say this three times very quickly). In addition, one participant from FGD I (F: III) said, "*Waan ani siin hin jedhini sitti naan jedhe ma naan jetta? Ani adoo silaa siin jedhee, siin jedhe siin jedha malee, siin hin jenne siin jedhaa?*" Meaning: Why did you say 'you said to me what I didn't say to you?' If I said to you, I would say 'I said'. So, how do I deny saying what I said? (Children are expected to say this three times quickly). The message that the above traditional playing conveys to children is that children should speak the language properly and be ready to complex questions and this helps children to be free from forgetfulness or slip of the tongue.

<sup>1</sup>Galma is homemade from the grass.

<sup>2</sup>Wata is a tribe that lives in Borana territory.

Besides, while expressing riddle as the strategy of children's socialization, a parent interviewee (P: V) stated that “*Muka cabsa arba, marra dheedaa looni, bisaan dhugu in du'a*”. Meaning: It breaks tree like an elephant; it grazes grass like a cow; if it drinks water, it will die. The answer is fire. *Fooladhee raasaa reebbe, dhaleeijoolleedheedhe* (meaning: I run to bush while ready to give birth, I fear my child after I gave birth. The answer is feces). Likewise, one key informant (KI: III) stated that “*Sitti dhoofta reettiin gaafa suluudaa*” (meaning: Goat with a sharp horn has pricked you: the answer is thorn). Therefore, from what is described above, one can clearly understand that these strategies help to socialize children through developing their critical thinking, and teach them what is painful and how children should care for themselves as well as learn about their surroundings.

According to the participants of FGDs I and II, families observe what children are playing. As to them, Borana always say ‘*ijoolleen hin tapahattuu in dhoofti*’ (in children’s play, there are predictions). For instance, if they donot go out of home for playing: predict famine; when they go out of home for playing: predict prosperity; if they play with *Iddii* (solanum or Sodom apple): predict cattle or symbol of richness; when they divided into groups and fight one another: predict conflict. So, from what children play, the Borana gather information about what will happen and prepare themselves to defend and use observing children’s play as strategies of socialization. The other parent interviewee (P: III) also expressed that:

We, Borana, advise children to respect everybody in their community (not imitating and insulting people with disability or old age) and culture, be honest and trustworthy, take responsibility for their action, and avoid conflict with anyone. Also, we advise children if they do what is not socially accepted, by saying ‘please this is not our culture’. But we don’t tell the rationale behind doing what is wrong and immoral. This hidden concept of consequence itself is a mechanism to socialize children (creating restrain in their minds not to do immoral thing again). If you justify the consequences, children and anyone will disrespect the *Gadaa* values. While children are herding and grazing, we tell them to herd the cattle carefully and to take care of themselves; if not, a wild animal will eat the cattle and harm you. If they fail to ensure their responsibility, we may give a warning by saying ‘*akaayiin dhiira duraa lama hin gubattu*’ (the roasting done by a man does not get burned for a second time). This helps to avoid a similar mistake which will happen next time. Beyond warning, children must be punished through beating with a stick. We believe ‘*ijoolleen Waaqa hin qabduu waaqii isii ulee*’ (children do not have God, their God is a stick). This shows children fear punishment than their family.

The finding from the in-depth interview with children indicated that their parents socialize them through advice (do this or do not do that), punishing when they do wrong (through beating with stick and insulting also refuse to give them food for a period of time) and rewarding when they do great (e.g. kiss them as a reward and give cattle). Furthermore, the data revealed that parents and other agents of children's socialization often advice children by saying do not fight with your friends; do not talk bad words or insult anyone; obey elders; properly take responsibility; use milk and other food wisely, and do not be a liar and pretender. Parents also advise children to help vulnerable people with all what they have; not to carry heavy things, swim water, and to fear snake and other dangerous animals during herding and grazing, and to keep their personal hygiene.

For instance, one child (C: II) said:

One day, my father gave me the assignment to count our cattle during *galchuma* (a time during which a herd of cattle returns home). After I did, he asked me whether the cattle returned home in peace. I said, yes. Then after, somebody called through the phone and told him that one of our cattle went to their village, 'please come and check', he said. For this, my father beat me with a stick and advised me not to do this again. Also, the next day, I was sitting at home during *galchuma*. My father aggressively told me that it is not culture that a boy sits in the home while the cattle are returning home.

In line with the above opinion, another child (C: IV) said, “One day, I refused to carry my little sister while she was crying and my mother punished me by beating me with a stick.” Also, as strategies of children's socialization, the interviewed parents pointed out that having limited relations with children as elders is advisable to avoid disrespect and make them more obedient. For instance, one father (P: III) stated that

*“Ijoolleen yoo irga itti qiidan munnee namaatti qiiddi”* (when one smiles at children showing the gums, children will grin their anus at a person). Meaning: children do not respect whoever is familiar with them, so limiting unnecessary relation with children as an elder is the best mechanism to teach children respect and socialize them well.

In addition to the above strategies, FGD I participants pointed out that teaching children about *Gadaa* values is an important way to socialize them. For instance, they stated *‘Ijoollee dhugaa barsiisan’* (children must be taught the truth). In the culture of Borana, truth is like health. God loves the truth. It is perceived as God’s child *‘dhugaan ilmee Waaqaati’*, so children should be socialized under the umbrella of truth in the *Gadaa* to be upright and honest. A key informant (KI: I) said, *“Namii dhugaa irraatti du’e waan jiru fakkaata”* (one who died for the truth, believed as if he/she still alive). In line with this, one interviewed parent (P: IV) said, *“Namii qaroo, dureessaa fi jabaa ta’eef nama hin bulchu. Yoo qajeelaa ta’e nama bulcha.”* This implies a person does not lead his community because of his intelligence, resources, and braveness, but because of his/her uprightness or trustworthiness.

As the strategy of children’s socialization, sons are allowed to visit elders, who are recognized for their *argaa-dhageetti* (total knowledge acquired through seeing and hearing). In line with this, one interviewed parent (P: V) stated, *“The sons learn from elders through seeing and hearing. And this helps them learn the culture, lead and hold Gadaa power in their near future.”* Besides, the interviewed key informant (KI: II) said, *“The predetermination of the sons to visit elders implies how knowledge in Gadaa is expected to pass through patriarchy, allows sons dominantly hold political power in Gadaa, and makes them rich in social capital.”*

#### **4.5.Challenging Factors for Children’s Socialization**

The findings revealed that there are various challenging factors for children's socialization. The findings from study participants (Parents, Key informants, and FGD I and II) indicated that the challenging factors are being with families and villagers with socially unacceptable behaviors, lack of advice, corporal punishment, divorce, *khat* and alcohol addiction, and early marriage. In addition, poverty, being orphan, government intervention in *Gadaa* and children's misbehaviors itself affects children’s socialization in the wrong ways (e.g. being glutton). For instance, while expressing how excessive love affects children's socialization, one key informant interviewee (KI: II) said:

The mother loves the first and last born, and the one she suffers from pain during giving birth. She doesn't want to expose his/her mistake to be punished by the father. When the birth of a child comes with good fortune, parents may believe this as a symbol of prosperity, so they are not eager to punish while he/she is doing wrong.

Moreover, to explain how government intervention in *Gadaa* impacts children's socialization, one father (P: IV) stated that in the *Gadaa*, when a woman accused a man of doing wrong against her, no need of searching for evidence and the defendant ( a man) will get sanction for what he did. Borana believe *‘Dubbiin nadheenii dhara hin qabduu dhugaa itti hin barbaadan’*. This implies the word of women is true, no need for further investigation. It is believed that if a woman has lied, this evil will turn back to her and harm her children. So, she is expected to be honest about the goodness of herself and her children. Any conflict between husband and wife does not lead them to make divorce and their patrimony will never be partitioned in *Gadaa*, because the role of the clan is paramount in preventing divorce and sustaining the family's life. During the shade of a meeting or clan's meeting, if a woman comes with any cases, the priority is given to her. But, the intervention of the government in *Gadaa* affects this culture and exposes women to make divorce highly emphasizing as a court is the best place than *Gadaa* to enforce the right decision. These open a chance for children to be left without appropriate family supervision and end up with poor socialization.

Poverty is also stated as a challenging factor; one interviewed mother ( P: II) stated that if the parents are failing to provide adequate food, children may go from home to home to beg and become *kajeeltuu* ( a person who desires what belong to others or craving other person’s things). Likewise, the interviewed key informant



(KI: II) said, “Divorce creates inconsistency of the relationship between the parents and children which will end up in low attachment, poor supervision and socialization.” Additionally, KI: II stated:

Gender inequality in the community limits girls' role which they develop through wandering and playing with their peers to develop social skills, and it only allows them to work at home or under their mother's arm-pit. These will affect their social skills and socialization abilities. Also, early marriage in the community opens the way for children not to be socialized well because the couples themselves are too young and not well trained to socialize their children. This opens the way for children to be socialized by their grandmother which, as stated earlier is an ineffective agent of children's socialization in the community.

In line with the above opinion, while expressing having friends with unacceptable social behaviors as a challenging factor, one key informant (KI: I) said, “*Fardii harree waliin oolu dhuufuu barata.*” Meaning: a horse that spends its day with a donkey learns to fart. From this, one can clearly understand that children do not give or reward one another their physical color but give their behavior to one another. Similarly, FGD I participants pointed out that parents with bad behavior allow their child to sip or taste alcohol and this will lead a child to be drunk. In addition, parents may drink in the presence of the children, which will expose them to imitate or observe and act like their parents. One interviewed mother (P: I) said, “*Ijoollen waan warrii waarii haasa'u waaree haasofti*” (children talk about what their parents discuss during late-night while they are herding and grazing). The message the above proverb conveys to the parents is that parents should be role models for their children and should critically think whatever they do or be aware of the presence of children or as children are their followers.

However, the opinion of one mother (P: III) is contrary to the aforementioned participants. She said, “*Ilmeedhalanmaleeofihindhalan.*” Meaning: one does not give birth to oneself (parents and children are different). In line with this, the interviewed parent (P: V) said, “*Abbaan damma nyaateef ilma afaan hin urgaa'u.*” Meaning: Even if the father eats honey, the mouth of the son does not get sweet. This implies, a son is not always like his father. Sometimes children brought up in a good family may not be socialized in a good manner. To support this view, one participant from FGD II (F: VIII) said, “*Garaan haadhaa bofaa buutii baata*” (mother's womb carries different things). Meaning: the same mother has offspring for both good and bad to indicate children's behavior is natural.

The participants of the study were asked about the responsible body for the existing challenges for children's socialization. They pointed out that all community members and all government sectors are responsible. But, a great responsibility is given to the father because Borana say ‘*warra ufii abbaatti duraatti du'a*’ (the father dies before the family) (literal meaning: it's a father who must stand between his family and any danger or problems and rule his family to conform the community and socialized well).

## 5. Discussion

As the finding indicated that everyone in the community is responsible to socialize children because the outcomes of socialization are for the betterment of all the communities. In contrast, according to Arnett (1995), the extended family does not play a significant role in children's socialization in the Western world. Furthermore, due to the focus on individualism and the lack of long-term attachments and obligations amongst community members in the Western world, the function of the community in socialization is not as such effective (Bellah et al., as cited in Arnett, 1995).

Children's socialization agents play a role in shaping every aspect of a child's development in line with social and cultural aspirations, as well as the needs and expectations of the society in which the child lives (Huang et al., 2019). Similarly, we found that children's socialization agents teach them societal values, self-care skills, social skills, language, cognitive skills, motor skills, gender roles, mistake correction, and orientation to their families, peers, clans, and community. According to the findings, children's socialization strategies include advising, storytelling, and riddles, as well as punishment (e. g. beating with a stick, pitching and

yelling). Other strategies include educating children by showing things and cultural events in their environment, putting them in real-life situations (participating in activities), and properly answering their questions or offering factual information. In the same manner, Asafa (2012) found that children in Oromo society learn from their families, communities, and experts, and also learn stories, folk tales, riddles, and other mental games that enable them gain societal information. Also, storytelling among the Guji-Oromo gives possibilities for constructive bonding between parents and children, as well as to educate and entertain, all of which are helpful to the socialization process (Tadesse, 2014). Similarly, we found that storytelling helps children recreate, build social bonds, and learn about their community's culture, animals, natural resources, and surrounding environment, humanity's role, and inhuman actions or behaviors. The findings also revealed that riddles, as a socialization tool, help in the socialization of children through developing critical thinking, entertaining them, preventing slips of the tongue, teaching them what is painful or hurts them, and teaching them how to care for themselves.

The challenging factors for children's socialization are multiple as stated in the literature. For instance, loss of one or both parents, divorce, alcoholism, family violence and poverty reduce the popularity of a child among peers, which can lead to poor socialization of children (Napora, 2015). Additionally, children's socialization is influenced by their home environment, and it is essential for children to be surrounded by mentally and physically stable adult family members who are consistent, reliable, loving, empathetic, and encouraging (Yunus & Dahlan, 2013). In line with this, as a result, children who have been rejected have trouble connecting with peers, and they prefer to avoid engagement with others, which has an impact on their socialization process (Schaffer, as cited in Napora, 2015). Similarly, we found that being with families and villagers who engage in socially unacceptable behaviors, a lack of advice, corporal punishment, divorce, poverty, drug addiction, orphan hood, early marriage, excessive love for children, and government intervention in the *Gadaa* system are all challenging factors for children's socialization.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Everyone in the Borana Oromo community is responsible for the socialization of the children. Parents and other extended families, siblings, friends, villagers, head of the village, clan, *Abbaa Gadaa* (head of *Gadaa*), strangers, and the community as a whole are all agents of children's socialization in the Borana Oromo *Gadaa* system. These agents of children's socialization teach children societal values, language, self-care skills, cognitive, motor and social skills, and gender roles. In *Gadaa*, on the other hand, children's socialization strategies are diverse. Some of these include advising, punishing, storytelling and riddles, practicing life situations (participating in activities), providing factual information, and teaching culture-based trustworthiness and morals. These strategies help children in being entertained as well as learning about their community's and environment's culture, humanity's role, and inhuman acts or behaviors. It also helps in the socialization of children by encouraging critical thinking and preventing slips of the tongue. Children's socialization is not always smooth. There are various challenging factors that may hinder the socialization process of children.

Practitioners, researchers, and the community should be aware of the existing policy, national and international documents on families and children's rights. This can help parents and communities to eliminate practices that discriminate against women and the factors that affecting socialization. The future research should expand the scope of the present study by exploring the children's socialization in each *Gadaa* grades to understand how children's socialization develops across the life course, parenting styles in *Gadaa*.

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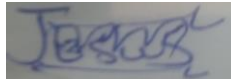
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